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ABSTRACT

Superintendents who aspire to lead rarely find clear explanations of what to expect from their constituents or about what they should do. This book presents findings of a study that explored superintendents' approaches to leadership, constituents' responses to their superintendents' initiatives, and the resulting changes in practice. The book is based on interviews with 12 beginning superintendents and with 25 constituents in each school district. Chapter 1 lays out the challenge of leadership for the superintendency, examining how changes in the context of public education have altered the demands on school leaders. Chapter 2 focuses on the search and selection process. The following three chapters center on issues of educational leadership. Chapter 3 discusses the superintendent's role in crafting a plan for school improvement; chapter 4 presents the cases of three superintendents who introduced reforms that followed from their visions; and chapter 5 explores what superintendents do to counter teachers' skepticism about their intentions and capabilities. The next two chapters deal with the superintendent as a political leader. The sixth chapter discusses the superintendent's relationship with the school board, local government, and teachers' unions; and the seventh chapter examines the political leadership of one superintendent who simultaneously dealt with three political issues. Chapters 8 and 9 consider the managerial leadership of the superintendent. The eighth chapter explores the question of whether managers can be leaders through three case studies. Chapter 9 considers how the new superintendents used organizational structures to advance shared understandings and consonant actions among constituents. The final chapter offers six broad lessons for collaborative leadership and suggestions for preparing superintendents for that challenge. An index and appendix containing methodological notes are included. (Contains 114 references.) (LMI)